

Capsule Summary
SM-460
St. Francis Xavier Chapel
St. George's Island
Private

1893

Saint Francis Xavier Chapel is significant as one of only two places of worship which survive on Saint George's Island. Built in 1893, the chapel was recently restored. Except for the modified bell tower, the building is little altered in exterior form and interior finish. The chapel continues to be used for Saturday evening services during the summer months.

Funding for the construction of a Catholic church on the island began in 1887 following a mass held at the Adams' Hotel. Joseph and Sally Hobbs donated 19/100's of an acre to the Corporation of Roman Catholic Clergymen in 1889. Located next to the old island graveyard, a church was constructed on the site by Forrester and Ingram in 1893.

In 1974 the church was closed because it was deemed unsafe. Soon thereafter the roof fell in. Over time the church filled with dirt and debris. In 1980, a group spearheaded by Harrison and Ann Robrecht formed to restore the church. After seven years of hard work, the church reopened in 1987 as "Saint Francis Xavier Chapel," a mission of St. George's Church located in Valley Lee.

SM-460, St. Francis Xavier Chapel
St. Mary's County
Maryland Comprehensive State Historic Preservation Plan Data

Historic Context

Geographic Organization: Western Shore

Chronological/Developmental Period: Industrial/Urban Dominance, 1870 - 1930.

Historic Period Theme: Architecture
Religion

Resource Type

Category: Structure

Historic Environment: Rural

Historic Function and Use: Church

Known Design Source: none

Magi No.

DOE yes no

Maryland Historical Trust

State Historic Sites Inventory Form

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic

and/or common St. Francis Xavier Chapel

2. Location

street & number Thomas Road not for publicationcity, town St. George Island vicinity of congressional district 5state Maryland county St. Mary's

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<u> </u> district	<u> </u> public	<u>X</u> occupied	<u> </u> agriculture	<u> </u> museum
<u>X</u> building(s)	<u>X</u> private	<u> </u> unoccupied	<u> </u> commercial	<u> </u> park
<u> </u> structure	<u> </u> both	<u> </u> work in progress	<u> </u> educational	<u> </u> private residence
<u> </u> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<u> </u> entertainment	<u>X</u> religious
<u> </u> object	<u> </u> in process	<u>X</u> yes: restricted	<u> </u> government	<u> </u> scientific
	<u> </u> being considered	<u> </u> yes: unrestricted	<u> </u> industrial	<u> </u> transportation
	<u>X</u> not applicable	<u> </u> no	<u> </u> military	<u> </u> other:

4. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name St. George Catholic Churchstreet & number P.O. Box 9 telephone no.: (301) 994 0607city, town Valley Lee state and zip code Maryland 20692

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. St. Mary's County Courthouse liber JFF 11street & number folio 107city, town Leonardtown state Maryland

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title date federal state county local depository for survey records city, town state

7. Description

Survey No. **SM 460**

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date of move _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

Contributing Resource Count: 1

Saint Francis Xavier Chapel is located on the east side of Thomas Road on Saint George's Island. The chapel stands alone, separated from the road by a chain link fence. A concrete sidewalk extends from the street to the main entrance and around to the south side of the building. Gravemarkers flank the chapel on the north and south sides. Some of the graves to the south are located in the "old graveyard" and predate the construction of the chapel. A large bell resting on concrete blocks is located on the west side of the chapel just north of the entrance walk. Inscribed on one side of the bell is "McShane Bell Foundry, Baltimore, MD 1893." On the opposite side of the bell is the inscription "Presented by Sarah W. Gillian. To the glory of God. And in memory of her beloved son." This bell is not original to the chapel. A wood sign inscribed with the name of the chapel and the dates 1893 - 1993 stands next to the chapel entrance. The chapel faces west towards the Potomac River with the roof oriented on an east/west axis.

Completed in 1893, the chapel is a frame structure now sheathed with german vinyl siding. The roof is covered with asphalt shingles. The foundation, which probably consists of brick piers, is not visible.

The west (main) elevation is marked by a two-story entrance vestibule which once served as a bell tower. A pair of replacement six-panel doors provide access to the chapel interior. Centered above this entrance is a double hung lancet window with a colored glass image of the Virgin Mary. A triangular, louvered vent is located in the eave of the gable end vestibule. From the apex of the vestibule roof projects a white cross. The main block of the building is blind and finished with a plain eave board.

The south side of the vestibule is pierced by a double hung, colored glass lancet window. Three two-over-two sash windows with wide, plain surrounds light the main block of the church. A gable roof wing projects from the east end of the church. A modern door provides access to this addition.

The east elevation of the of the south wing is pierced on the first and second floor by one one-over-one sash window with wide surrounds. A shed roof addition infills the northeast corner between the gable roof wing and the main block of the chapel. This addition is pierced by a six-panel door. The main block of the chapel is blind.

The north elevation is pierced by three two-over-two sash windows with wide, plain surrounds. The vestibule is pierced by a double hung, colored glass, lancet window.

8. Significance

Survey No. **Sm 460**

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> The interior...	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates **1893**

Builder/Architect **Forrester and Ingram**

check: Applicable Criteria: ☐ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D
and/or

Applicable Exception: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Level of Significance: ☐ national ☐ state ☒ local

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

Saint Francis Xavier Chapel is significant as one of only two places of worship which survive on Saint George's Island. Built in 1893, the chapel was recently restored. Except for the modified bell tower, the building is little altered in exterior form and interior finish. The chapel continues to be used for Saturday evening services during the summer months.

Funding for the construction of a Catholic church on the island began in 1887 following a mass held at the Adams' Hotel. Joseph and Sally Hobbs donated 19/100's of an acre to the Corporation of Roman Catholic Clergymen in 1889. This plot was located next to the old graveyard on the island. In 1892, construction of the church was begun by Forrester and Ingram. The church was dedicated on September 24, 1893. A letter describing the events of the dedication has been published in Edwind Beitzell's The Jesuit Missions of St. Mary's County, Maryland. According to Beitzell, the church's membership numbered around 100 in the 1890s and was about equally divided between white and African-American parishioners. Graves on the right side of the church were reserved for whites, and those on the the left were reserved for blacks.

Sometime during the 1950s, the church belfry was struck by lightning. The damage was so great that the front of the church was reworked as it appears today. The original bell sat on the lawn in front of the church for many years and then disappeared. The bell currently located on the grounds was purchased from a dealer in antique bells in Michigan. Prior to its relocation to Maryland the bell was used by a church in Philadelphia.

In 1974 the church was closed because it was deemed unsafe. Soon thereafter the roof fell in. Over time the church filled with dirt and debris. In 1980, a group spearheaded by Harrison and Ann Robrecht formed to restore the church. After seven years of hard work, the church reopened in 1987 as "Saint Francis Xavier Chapel," a mission of St. George's Church located in Valley Lee.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Survey No. **SM 460***See attached.*

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 19/100's of an acreQuadrangle name St. George IslandQuadrangle scale 1:24 000

UTM References do NOT complete UTM references

A

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Zone Easting NorthingB

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Zone Easting NorthingC

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D

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E

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F

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G

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H

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Verbal boundary description and justification

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Elizabeth Hughes, Historic sites Surveyororganization St. Mary's County Planning & Zoningdate October 1994street & number 328 Washington Streettelephone (301) 475 4662city or town Leonardtownstate Maryland

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust
Shaw House
21 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
(301) 269-2438

SM-460, St. Francis Xavier Chapel
St. Mary's County
7.1 Description

The interior walls of the vestibule are painted blue and the ceiling is covered with acoustic tile. Double doors, consisting of a single light over one panel, with wide surrounds separate the vestibule from the main block of the chapel. The interior walls of the chapel are sheathed with beaded board wainscoting that extends from the floor to the chair rail. The arched ceiling is also sheathed with wainscoting. A molded cornice defines the boundary between the wall surface and the initial curve of the ceiling. Two metal tie rods extend from the north to the south wall of the building at about the level of the cornice. The interior window surrounds are plain and finished with an interior bead. Two rows of seven wood pews extend from the east to the west end of the structure creating one major central aisle and two minor aisles. A raised altar is located at the east end of the chapel. The altar is flanked on either side by a four-panel door on the east wall. These doors open into a storage and changing room behind the altar. A balcony/choir loft is located at the west end of the church. The balcony is supported by chamfered posts. The balcony stair is finished with turned balusters and a turned newell post. The balcony balustrade is a highly decorative example of scroll sawn woodwork. Four pews are located in the balcony.

SM-460, St. Francis Xavier Chapel
St. Mary's County
8.1 Significance

Chain of Title

TO: Corporation of Roman Catholic Clergymen

FROM: Mrs. Sally J. Hobbs and Mr. Joseph C. Hobbs

RECORD: St. Mary's County Land Records, Liber JFF 11, folio 107.

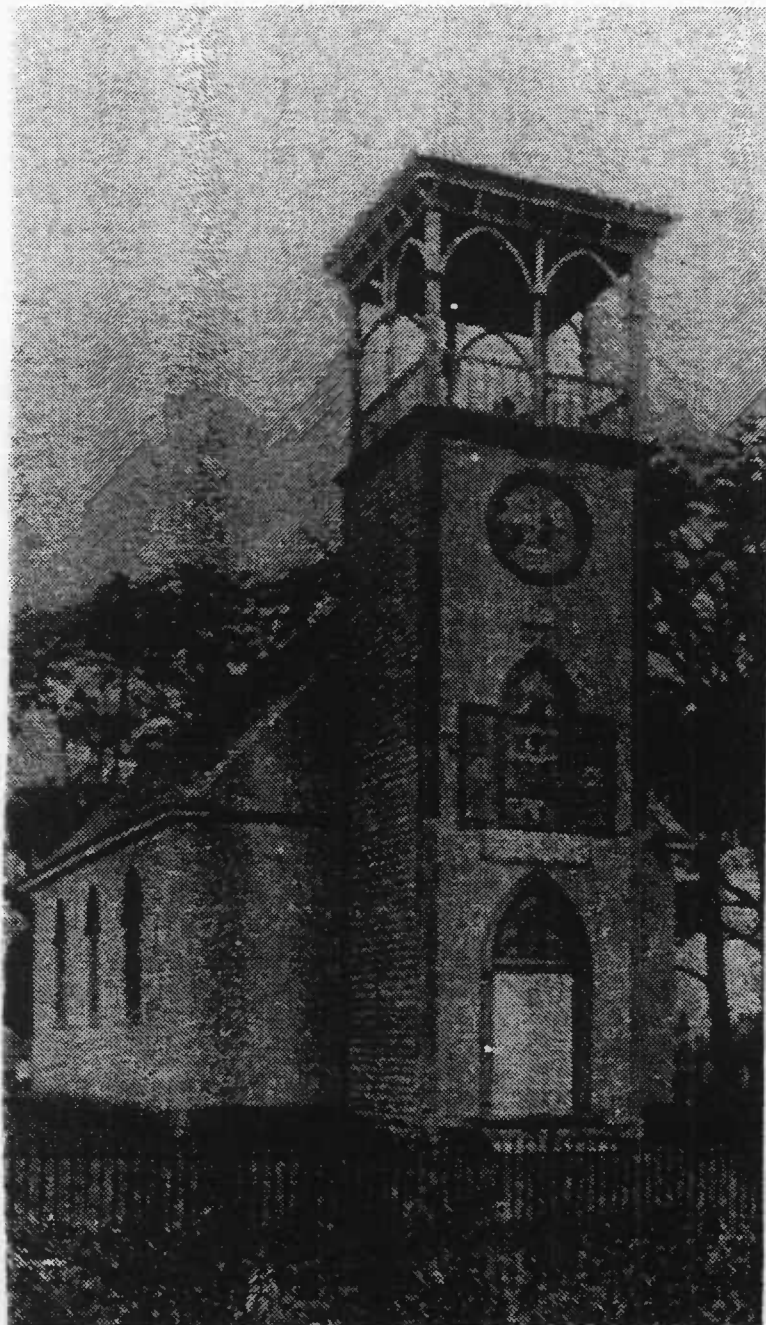
DATE: January 2, 1889.

NOTES: Transfer of a tract on St. George's Island being 19/100's of an acre and Part of Lot No. 1 next to the old graveyard.

SM-460, St. Francis Xavier Chapel
St. Mary's County
8.2 Significance

Photograph of the Chapel with the original bell tower intact.

Source: Booklet entitled "St. George Church, Valley Lee, Maryland, Dedication 1851-1959" and dated October 10, 1959.



SM-460, St. Francis Xavier Chapel
St. Mary's County
8.3 Significance

Photograph of the Chapel following the damage to the belfry in 1954 and prior to the restoration in the 1990s.

Source: Rev. J. M. Johnson, S. J. Historical Summary of the Shrines, Churches, Chapels, and Homes of the Priests in St. Mary's County, Maryland Since 1634, (N.p.: n.p., 1967).

St. Francis Xavier's Church
St. George's Island, Maryland



St. Francis Xavier's Church, St. George's Island, built in 1892 and dedicated in 1895

SM-460, St. Francis Xavier Chapel
St. Mary's County
8.4 Significance

Plat of the Chapel site and the "old graveyard."

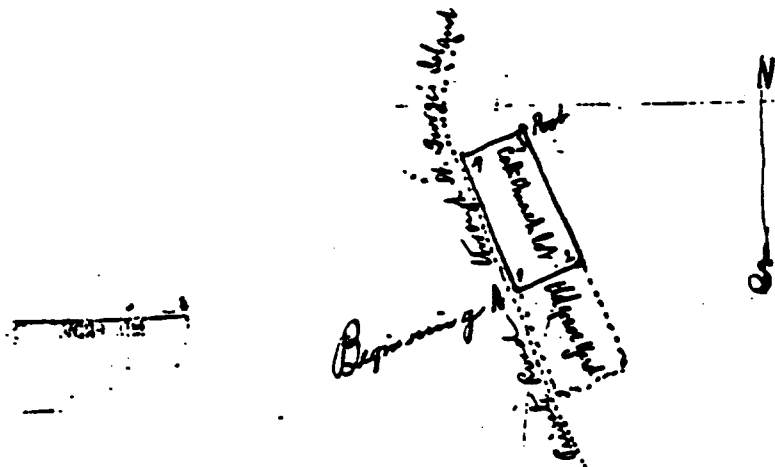
Source: Booklet entitled "St. Francis Xavier Chapel, 1893 - 1993, St. George Island, Centennial Celebration" dated August 29, 1993.

ST. MARY'S MANOR
J. J. MARY'S CO.
MARYLAND

St. Georges Island
Church Lot

Part of Lot No 1 on St. Georges Island St. Mary's
Tallie J Hobbs and Joseph C Hobbs her husband
Gift to Rev. Pys Neal to erect a Catholic Church -
Beginning at a post the north West corner of the old
graveyard on said Island and running with said
grave yard fence N. $63\frac{1}{4}^{\circ}$ E. 3.76 ps to the North
East corner of said grave yard fence, thence
N. $26\frac{1}{4}$ W 8.05 ps to a stake S $63\frac{1}{4}$ W. 3.76 ps
to a post thence $24\frac{1}{4}$ E 8.05 ps to the beginning
Containing $\frac{19}{100}$ acre

Surveyed this 12th day of Nov 1888
By Geo B. Brent



SM-460, St. Francis Xavier Chapel
St. Mary's County
9.1 Major Bibliographical References

Beitzell, Edwin W. The Jesuit Missions of St. Mary's County, Maryland. 1960.
Abell, MD: n.p., 1976.

Johnson, Rev. J. M., S. J. Historical Summary of the Shrines, Churches,
Chapels, and Homes of the Priests in St. Mary's County, Maryland Since 1634. N.p.:
n.p., 1967.

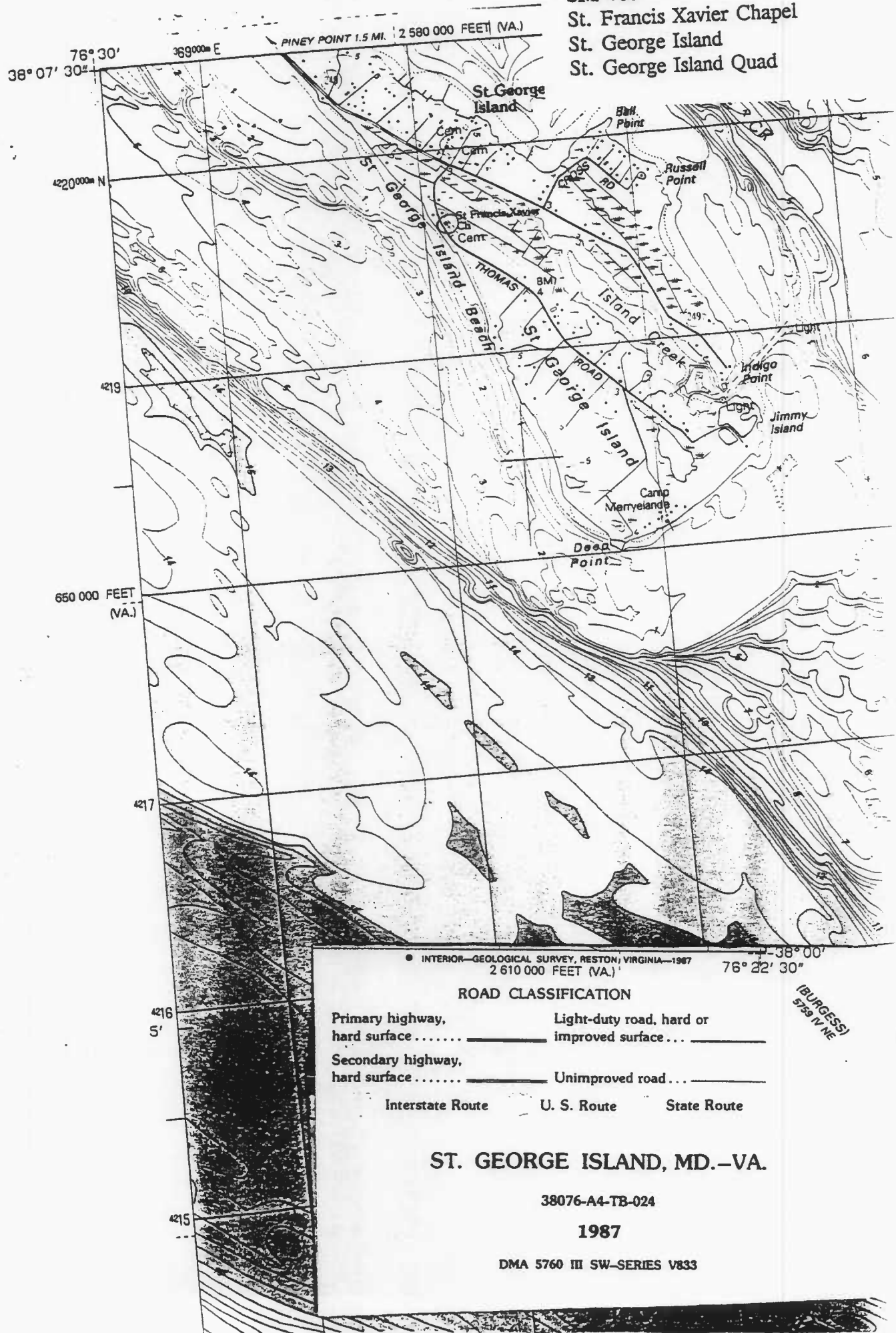
"St. Francis Xavier Chapel, 1893 - 1993, St. George Island, Centennial
Celebration," 29 August 1993.

"St. George Church, Valley Lee, Maryland, Dedication 1851- 1959," 10 October
1959.

St. Francis Xavier Chapel
St. George Island
St. George Island Quad

St. Francis Xavier Chapel
St. George Island
St. George Island Quad

St. George Island Quad





SM-460

St. Francis Xavier Chapel

St. Mary's County MD

E Hughes

12/94

MD SHPD

West Elevation

1/3



SM-460

St. Francis Xavier - 10-1

St. Mary's County, MD

E. Hughes

12/94

MD SHPO

NE elevation

2/3



SM- 460

St Francis Xavier Chapel

St Mary's County, ME

1. Hughes

12/10/14

140 1000

Interior, looking West

2/3